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FEATURES

DO YOU KNOW YOUR CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT?8

The General Election is Nov. 5. Here's a map of the state's new Congressional districts, plus help in locating your state House and Senate districts.

A TRIFECTA AT TRI-COUNTY14

Donna, Robin and Haley Peacock of Wayne County are shining examples of the Touchstone Energy "power of human connections."

HOW WE LEARNED TO DRIVE16

From the old dirt road to the interstate highway, these are your true stories about driving lessons.

"FARMING DAYS OF FRANK STEELE"20

Art by Frank Duncan.

IN THE LAND OF COTTON25

Cotton farming has made a comeback in North Carolina.

DEPARTMENTS

FIRST PERSON6

Cooperatives are sensible businesses . . . It's molasses time in Carolina Country.

MORE POWER TO YOU10

How cooperatives fit into today's wholesale energy market . . . Blue Ridge Electric tests aerial tree trimming.

MARKETPLACE28-33

A showcase of goods and services.

JOYNER'S CORNER31

Can you go from Urban to Rural in one step?

CAROLINA COMPASS34

October events across the state.

HANK'S GARDENING GUIDE38

Fall and winter plantings will have time to develop roots and adjust before spring.

ENERGY CENTS40

New electric space heaters.

CLASSIFIED ADS41

New this month: "Walt's Wit & Wisdom" tapes.

CAROLINA KITCHEN42

Savory Stuffed Pumpkin, Halloween Party Mix and Graveyard Cake.



On the Cover

Robert McDaniel and his brothers are fourth generation cotton farmers in Rutherford County.
(Scott Ely Photography)

See page 25 for story.



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20	Call for more information		9.53	9.10	14.65	13.56	23.18	21.00
21			9.53	9.10	14.65	13.56	23.18	21.00
22			9.53	9.10	14.65	13.56	23.18	21.00
23			9.53	9.10	14.65	13.56	23.18	21.00
24			9.53	9.10	14.65	13.56	23.18	21.00
25			9.53	9.10	14.65	13.56	23.18	21.00
26			9.53	9.18	14.65	13.78	23.18	21.43
27			9.62	9.18	14.87	13.78	23.62	21.43
28			9.62	9.18	14.87	13.78	23.62	21.43
29			9.62	9.18	14.87	13.78	23.62	21.43
30			9.62	9.18	14.87	13.78	23.62	21.43
31			9.62	9.18	14.87	13.78	23.62	21.43
32			9.62	9.18	14.87	13.78	23.62	21.43
33			9.62	9.18	14.87	13.78	23.62	21.43
34			9.71	9.18	15.09	13.78	24.06	21.43
35			9.71	9.27	15.09	14.00	24.06	21.87
36			9.71	9.36	15.09	14.21	24.06	22.31
37			9.71	9.45	15.09	14.43	24.06	22.75
38			9.80	9.53	15.31	14.65	24.50	23.18
39			9.88	9.71	15.53	15.09	24.93	24.06
40			10.06	9.80	15.96	15.31	25.81	24.50
41			10.23	9.97	16.40	15.75	26.68	25.37
42			10.32	10.15	16.62	16.18	27.12	26.25
43			10.50	10.32	17.06	16.62	28.00	27.12
44			10.67	10.50	17.50	17.06	28.87	28.00
45			11.02	10.67	18.37	17.50	30.62	28.87

MONTHLY RATES

Issue Age	\$50,000		\$100,000		\$250,000		\$500,000	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
46	Call for more information		11.37	10.93	19.25	18.15	32.37	30.18
47			11.90	11.20	20.56	18.81	35.00	31.50
48			12.42	11.46	21.87	19.46	37.62	32.81
49			13.03	11.81	23.40	20.34	40.68	34.56
50			13.65	12.07	24.93	21.00	43.75	35.87
51			14.35	12.42	26.68	21.87	47.25	37.62
52			14.96	12.77	28.21	22.75	50.31	39.37
53			15.66	13.12	29.96	23.62	53.81	41.12
54			16.45	13.65	31.93	24.93	57.75	43.75
55			17.41	14.17	34.34	26.25	62.56	46.37
56			18.37	14.78	36.75	27.78	67.37	49.43
57			19.51	15.40	39.59	29.31	73.06	52.50
58			20.73	16.10	42.65	31.06	79.18	56.00
59			22.31	16.97	46.59	33.25	87.06	60.37
60			24.41	18.11	51.84	36.09	97.56	66.06
61			27.03	19.25	58.40	38.93	110.68	71.75
62			29.92	20.56	65.62	42.21	125.12	78.31
63			33.25	22.05	73.93	45.93	141.75	85.75
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ADDITIONAL APPLICATION REQUESTED FOR:
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E 0802

Cooperatives are sensible businesses

You might wonder whether the neighbors who formed their own electric distribution utility 60 years ago would be surprised that the same utility is in business today.

Back then, if you wanted electricity at your farm or house in rural North Carolina, the only choice many people had was to start their own utility. The existing utilities couldn't make a profit setting poles and running lines for miles and miles only to reach a few households, so you can understand why they wouldn't take electric power to rural areas. To help in those Depression years, the Franklin Roosevelt administration and Congress in 1936 passed the Rural Electrification Act that offered loans to locally-formed rural cooperatives prepared to set poles and run power to their members.

Here in Surry County and Yadkin County and the surrounding piedmont hills, farmers formed one of those cooperatives in 1940 and visited neighbors to get the \$5 you needed to join. One of those was 29-year-old Joe Pendry, whose family farmed in the Boonville area of Yadkin County. Joe actually paid the \$5 for some of his neighbors to join the cooperative, because even a dollar was hard to part with at that time, no matter how much you needed electricity.

At 91, Joe Pendry is still a member of that cooperative – Surry-Yadkin EMC – and has served on the board of directors since it was chartered. He is one of many members in this part of the state who is not surprised that the cooperative is still in business.

A cooperative runs its business for the benefit of its members, rather than to make a profit. A cooperative returns to its members any profits that remain after all business is taken care of, including operation, construction and maintenance. And cooperative members— who in fact own the business – have a voice in running the



By Michael S. Beasley

business, including electing the people who direct it and who hire the employees. Every electric cooperative among the 27 in this state listens to any members who have something to say about their service, no matter who the members are or what they say.

Because of this business structure, cooperatives are by nature responsive to their customers and communities, and that includes remaining innovative in the business of delivering electricity safely, reliably and at the lowest possible cost.

If you compare this way of doing business with just about any other way, you won't be surprised that electric cooperatives remain as strong and relevant today as they were 60 years ago, or even 100 years ago. You don't typically see electric cooperatives rise and fall according to their stock prices, or fads in the marketplace, or abrupt shifts in ownership. That's because business decisions are made by and for their owners – the consumers.

During this month of October – which is considered Cooperative Month nationwide, and also is when Surry-Yadkin EMC holds its annual meeting of members — I feel especially privileged to work for a cooperative.

Mike Beasley is executive vice president and general manager of Surry-Yadkin Electric Membership Corporation. He began work at the cooperative as a lineman 30 years ago and has served as service representative, member service and safety coordinator, and assistant manager. Surry-Yadkin EMC serves more than 25,000 households and businesses in Surry, Yadkin, Wilkes, Stokes and Forsyth counties. Its annual meeting of members will be held Oct. 5 in Dobson.

Making molasses in Yadkin Valley

There are some of us who still make molasses every year. We made 80 gallons in 2001.

We don't use a mule to grind the cane. We use a tractor. We intend to use an ox in 2002 to do the grinding if nothing happens.

We always have molasses day the last Saturday in September. In 2001, we churned butter, pulled a sled with the ox, made cider, sawed lumber and made molasses.

It's an all-day event with dinner on the grounds. We had about 200 people there and everyone had a great time. Some drank to much cider and got the stomach ache.

We had lots of people try their luck skimming molasses.

You can look on the Web and see us grinding the cane and cooking the molasses. Go to www.syrupmakers.com/church.

There are pictures of James Church, who is owner and operator of the mill; Hoy Moretz, ox owner and operator; James Winkler and Bob Reece. We work together to make the molasses.

Bob Reece
Lenoir
Blue Ridge EMC

October in Ashe County



I made this picture while visiting Mom in Jefferson. In the background is Mt. Jefferson.

Jean Kilby
Winston-Salem
Surry-Yadkin EMC

Making molasses in Moore County

At age 83, my Grandpa is still today making molasses. His name is David Davis and he lives in the Westmoore area in north-western Moore County.

Making molasses has been a part of my Grandpa's life for as long as he can remember. His father also made molasses, and Grandpa said he can remember being too little to reach up and get "skimmin's" himself, so his mother did it for him. The very furnace that my Grandpa uses today was his father's. The furnace was brought in from Chattanooga, Tenn., by railroad before my Grandpa was even born, so he doesn't know exactly how old it is. His father was the third owner, and he eventually sold the furnace, which changed hands several times before my Grandpa bought it back 50-some years ago.

His grinder is tractor-driven, although he says he has ground a lot of cane using mule power. The cane stalks are fed into the grinder and the juice comes out green and flows into a barrel before being put in the cooker, which sits on top of the furnace. The cooker is made up of a series of steel troughs with the juice very green in the first few. As it gets closer to the end, it becomes thicker and very brown. Grandpa watches it closely so it doesn't burn. If it does get too hot, he grabs the water hose to cool it down. It is then drained into a steel drum with a tap that is opened to fill the jars. Every so often, Grandpa jumps on a tractor to haul away the pile of stalks that have been through the grinder.

Molasses-making brings back many childhood memories for me. My grandparents kept me while my parents worked, and I spent many hours at the "syrup-pan," which is what we called it. There were lots of visitors at my grandparents' house when it was molasses-making time. My husband even remembers taking a school field trip to see the process when he was a child.



People just don't grow cane like they used to, but my Grandpa says that as long as someone keeps growing it, he will keep making molasses. This picture of him skimmin' molasses was taken September 29, 2001.

Stephanie D. Cagle
Seagrove
Randolph EMC

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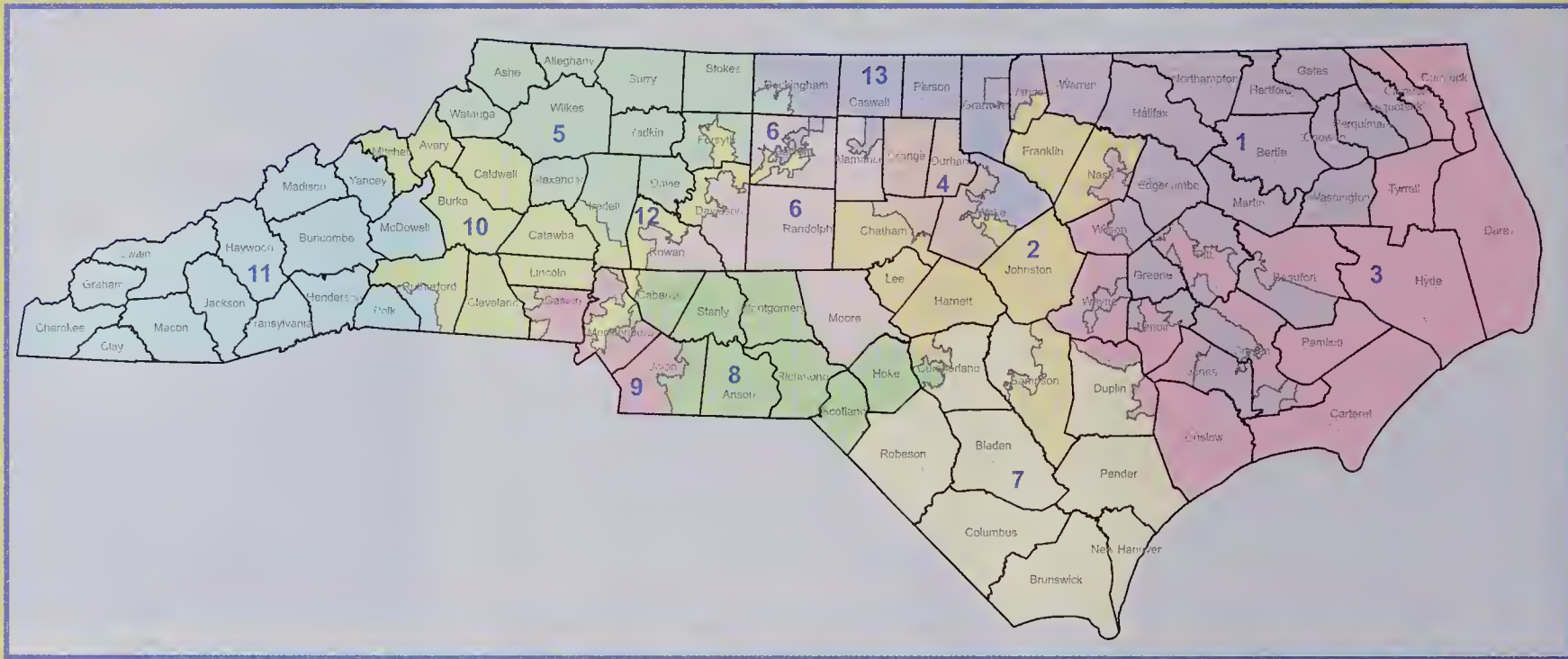
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ELECTION DAY IS NOV. 5

Do you know what district you're in?



The 13 Congressional districts for the 2002 elections were ratified in December 2001.

Finding House and Senate Districts is just a click away

With all the mapping and remapping of the N.C. House, N.C. Senate and U.S. Congressional districts recently, you may be wondering what district numbers to look for on your Nov. 5 General Election ballots. Registered voters received new voter registration cards in the mail late this summer. If you did not receive your card, or need additional assistance in finding your district, please contact your county's Board of Elections office.

If you have access to the Internet, the following steps will help you identify your N.C. House, N.C. Senate and Congressional districts:

1. Go to the General Assembly's Web site at www.ncga.state.nc.us/
2. Click on "Representation" in the header bar of the Web page, located right below the Great Seal of North Carolina.
3. Select "Who Represents Me."
4. Scroll to the bottom of the page and key in your home's 9-digit zip code in the "Representation by Zip Code" section of the page, and then hit "Go." If you don't know your 9-digit zip code, it may be listed on your driver's license, or you can find it using the tool indicated on this same Web page.
5. The listing will identify the existing House, Senate and Congressional districts for your home address, as well as the respective new districts being used for the 2002 elections. The new district numbers are the ones you will want to look for on the November 5 ballot.

This North Carolina General Assembly Web site also contains other information, such as a list of all potential candidates, information on upcoming legislation and audio broadcasts of the General Assembly meetings and conferences, and other General Assembly goings-on, as well as links to other government Web sites.

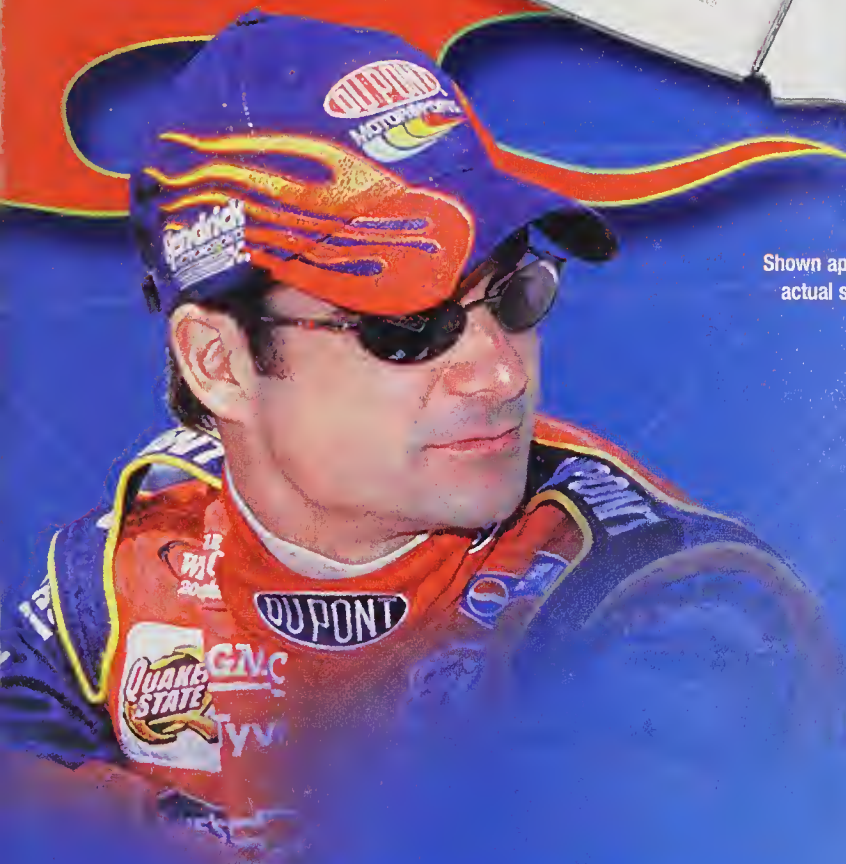
Remember, vote on Tuesday, Nov. 5. Let your voice be heard – you can't complain unless you vote. Polling hours are 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

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Carolina Country October 2002

The cooperative business model is cited as a good one for today's energy trading environment

Electric cooperatives have drawn compliments recently for the way they have entered the power marketing business.

The power marketing business has been emerging since 1992, when Congress opened the wholesale electricity business to competition. Initially, most power marketers did not own electrical generation, transmission or distribution assets. Instead, they bought and sold bulk power as a commodity. In the past five years, merchant energy firms have grown to combine power plant ownership, trading, distribution, and transmission under one firm. As a result, finding experts in the areas of risk management, generation fuel portfolio management and economic forecasting are just as important to electric cooperatives and other utilities as engineers and line workers are.

To work in the new field of power marketing, some cooperatives in 1998 formed The Alliance for Cooperative Energy Services Power Marketing, known as ACES Power Marketing. ACES Power is a federation of power supply and power marketing services, specifically designed to give electric cooperatives the efficiencies and economies of scale necessary to compete in today's wholesale energy market. ACES is owned by seven generation and transmission cooperatives, including the North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation (NCEMC), which supplies wholesale electric power to 26 of North Carolina's Touchstone Energy cooperatives. ACES also provides various energy services to approximately 20 other customers. ACES is headquartered in Indianapolis and maintains an East Regional Trading Center in Cary, N.C. Both offices maintain staff 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to manage customer energy needs.

Unlike other energy merchants — such as Enron and Dynegy — ACES is owned by member cooperatives and oper-



ACES Power Marketing's regional trading center in Cary, where staff works in today's wholesale power market for electric cooperatives 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

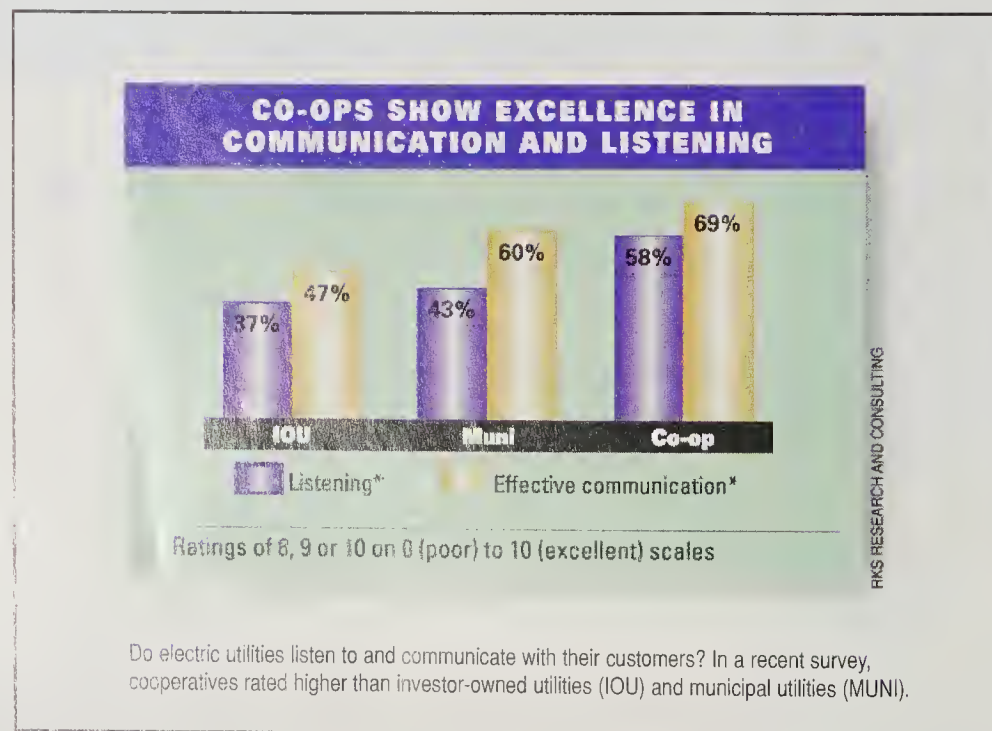
ated under cooperative principles and business practices. The goal of ACES is to provide trading and risk management services at cost, not at a profit. Each member of ACES, such as NCEMC, determines the risk and trading profile of its assets that ACES will operate under. All profits return directly to each member or customer.

The ACES staff, which numbers about 95 nationally, including 22 in Cary, develops a custom strategy for its customer energy portfolios and makes sure that cooperatives can take advantage of wholesale market opportunities and reduce exposure to energy market spikes.

In the context of news surrounding the demise of Enron, an authoritative source cited the cooperative business model as one that can succeed in a competitive energy market. In a recent issue of an industry trade publication, "The Desk," a weekly newsletter on power trading and risk management, columnist Diane Borska of Boston-based The Borska Group said that "a cooperative structure makes a lot of sense in today's environment. Participating organizations can share costs and risks, while achieving skill levels and economies of scale and scope they would likely otherwise fail to achieve."

Borska, managing partner for The Borska Group, a market intelligence consultancy, pointed out that ACES is "focused almost entirely on short-term (hourly, next day, next week) physical transactions. ACES admittedly does no speculative trading. But they do move a lot of volume. . . . The large number of small transactions ACES executes on behalf of its customers would certainly place it among any top volume movers in the sector."

Chuck Terrill, CEO of the NCEMC power supply cooperative and an ACES board member, said, "Although the wholesale market has changed more in the past few years than at any other time in our history, the basic cooperative principles of joining forces to create market strength has never been more relevant, and enables the cooperatives to deliver the best possible service, prices and energy reliability to our members."



State Supreme Court rules customer choice is OK in Craven County case

A recent North Carolina Supreme Court ruling determined that electricity customers are entitled to choose their electricity provider when certain circumstances are present.

On August 16, the state's highest court issued an opinion in a unique case involving two electricity providers — the City of New Bern and Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative. The case centered on a longstanding dispute about which provider was entitled to deliver electricity to a veterinary clinic located in Havelock, Craven County. The City of New Bern owns and operates its own municipal electric system, and is considered the primary supplier of electricity to customers within the New Bern city limits. The city is considered a secondary supplier, however, to customers located outside the city borders, as was the case with the Havelock Animal Hospital.

As a secondary supplier, the City of New Bern had served the clinic for many years at its original Havelock location. Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative also serves consumers in Havelock and is also considered a secondary supplier. (The Town of Havelock does not own and operate an electric distribution system and has not designated any electricity provider as a primary supplier, so there is no primary electric supplier for consumers in Havelock, only the two secondary suppliers involved in this case.)

The Havelock Veterinary Clinic owners built a new facility adjacent to their old clinic, at which time they contacted Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative and requested that the co-op become their electricity provider. The co-op complied. The City of New Bern continued to provide electric service to the older building until it was torn down, several months after the new facility became operational.

The court found that under state law, the consumer had the right to choose its power supplier under the circumstances of this case, which included that the new veterinary clinic was in close proximity to the electric lines of the two secondary electric suppliers.

Craig Conrad, executive vice president of Carteret-Craven Electric Cooperative, said, "We are pleased with the Supreme Court ruling, which we consider a victory for consumers. Havelock Veterinary Hospital believed our cooperative could provide them with the best service, and we felt the circumstances were legal and right for us to serve them."

H & J Action Photography



Touchstone Energy champions

Eastern North Carolina Touchstone Energy cooperatives sponsored the 2002 Babe Ruth Softball World Series for girls age 16 and under. The division's national championships were held in August in Greenville.

Teams from nine states participated, and many of them live in areas served by electric cooperatives. The series champions came from LaGrange, Texas, which is served by Fayette Electric Cooperative. The second-place winners came from Benton, Missouri, partially served by SEMO Electric Cooperative. Teams also came from areas served by Bluegrass Electric Cooperative in Kentucky and Sumter Electric Cooperative in Florida.

Blue Ridge Electric tests aerial tree trimming procedure

To test an alternative right-of-way trimming procedure, Blue Ridge Electric hired Aerial Solutions in July to conduct aerial trimming services on portions of its mountainous Ashe County and Watauga County transmission line right-of-way. Aerial Solutions operated a helicopter that has motor-powered rotary blades suspended from a boom on the aircraft for quick, safe and efficient trimming of trees.

While the cooperative is continuing to review aerial trimming, initial benefits included the ability to speed up the trimming process, resulting in cost savings. It also eliminated the need for workers travel across member property with heavy vehicles to reach rights-of way for trimming. Safety is also an important advantage. Where aerial trimming is used, crews of workers don't have to scale tall trees that are close to energized power lines.

A single pilot manipulates the helicopter, while ground crews are on hand during the process. Ground crews scout out the area ahead of time for safety precautions to identify tree species and plan the flight.

Before conducting the aerial trimming, Blue Ridge Electric informed members by sending staff to hand-deliver a letter explaining the procedure to property owners where aerial trimming was to be conducted. Cooperative personnel were also on hand at each site during the trimming.



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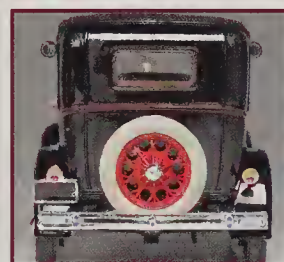
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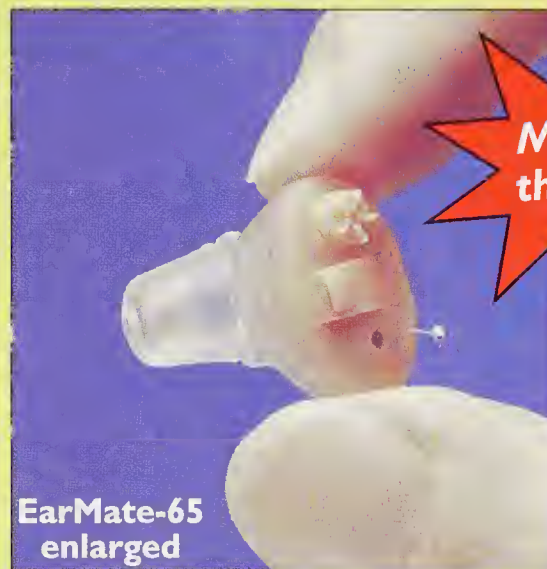
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A Trifecta at Tri-County

A COOPERATIVE, A FAMILY AND
THEIR COMMUNITY: THE POWER
OF HUMAN CONNECTIONS

By Kim Whorton Tripp

Donnoee Photography



Shining examples of how a cooperative is one big family, this family participated in three separate Tri-County EMC programs in 2002. Donna Peacock is flanked by her daughters, Haley (left) and Robin.

What do the winners of a Bright Ideas grant, a college scholarship and a trip to Washington, D.C., have in common?

Their home address, last name and hair color.

Donna Peacock and her daughters — Robin, 18, and Haley, 16 — have each benefited in 2002 from the “commitment to community” that Tri-County Electric Membership Corporation takes seriously as part of its business mission.

Donna won a Bright Ideas grant for her classroom at Southern Wayne High School. Robin is one of 19 students in the Wayne County, western Lenoir County and north Duplin County area to receive a Tri-County Electric Scholarship this year. And Haley was one of three high school students who represented the co-op on the Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington, D. C., in June.

It's unusual for three members of the same family to benefit from a single cooperative's community programs in the same year, especially because all three of the Tri-County EMC programs are independent of one another and judged independently as well. Like other co-op members, the Peacock women learned about the Bright Ideas grant program, the scholarship and the Youth Tour opportunity from friends and associates, from the co-op's monthly “The Tri-County News,” from Carolina Country magazine and other sources.

Like all 27 electric cooperatives across North Carolina, Tri-County EMC, which serves more than 20,000 consumer-members in Wayne, Duplin, Lenoir, Johnston, Jones, Sampson and Wilson counties, gives quietly and generously of its time, money and resources to help improve the quality of life for not only its members, but also for their communities and neighbors.

“Tri-County has reached out to us,” said Donna Peacock. “They've helped us tremendously. People don't always see that about Tri-County. I don't think they want to brag. They're too modest.”

Donna teaches the autistic life skills classroom at Southern Wayne High School in Dudley. Her students range in age from 12 to 21. “We don't get any special money in this

classroom, and we need special communication tools for them,” she said. While her life skills class does get the profits from a student-run coffee shop, it's not enough. So when she heard about the Bright Ideas Grant Program through Tri-County EMC, she applied. Bright Ideas provides grants to teachers for innovative classroom projects that may otherwise go unfunded. The program is sponsored by each of the state's 27 electric cooperatives and the North Carolina Association of Electric Cooperatives. Donna was thrilled when Tri-County funded her first project. She won her second Bright Ideas grant this year. “I apply every year,” she said. “I feel guilty if I don't.”

The Bright Ideas Grant Program really makes a difference in North Carolina schools. In the last two years alone, Tri-County EMC has given \$85,000 to local schools. Statewide, the electric co-ops give about \$350,000 per year to educators, and overall more than \$2 million since the inception of the program. Tri-County EMC's General Manager Mike Davis said, “I told our board of directors, if we really want to be a corporate citizen, here's where we can do it. When we're giving back to the schools, we're helping everybody,” Davis said.

Donna's oldest daughter, Robin, left Dudley in August bound for Chapel Hill and her freshman year of college. Robin ranked second in her class of 267 at Southern Wayne High School and has a list of community service credits to her name. With her mom's help, Robin applied for many scholarships and grants, including the \$500 Tri-County Electric Scholarship. The co-op offers \$500 scholarships for students entering a four-year school and \$250 to students entering a two-year school.

The Tri-County Electric scholarships are funded solely from the sales of the co-op's cookbook. So co-op employees sold a whopping 7,000 cookbooks in a little over a year. Scholarship judges look closely at the applicants' academic achievements. “All 19 winners had a 4.0 or better average,” Mike Davis said. “How do you turn down somebody like that?”

Enough money remains to fund the scholarships for at least the next two years. Tri-County EMC cookbooks are still on sale. (See below). "I took 10 and sold them myself," said Donna Peacock.

Haley Peacock says her weeklong trip to Washington, D.C., with 38 other high school juniors and seniors representing 16 co-ops from across North Carolina was "the best thing I've ever done."

Her mom encouraged her to apply for the trip. "As a single parent I knew it would be difficult to take my child to D.C. for five days," Donna said. Haley jumped at the opportunity and began crafting an essay that would win her a spot on the Youth Tour. "I had never been to D.C. so I knew right off the bat that's what I wanted," Haley said.

Two moments on the trip stand out for Haley. One was meeting her representative Congressman Walter Jones. The other was hearing a talk from a survivor of the September 11 attack on the Pentagon. "He has struggled," she said. "He was severely burned, but he survived. He told us not to take life for granted." Students were also encouraged to talk about how they were involved in their communities, particularly in the wake of September 11.

Haley, like Robin, is also an excellent student, and plans to apply for a Tri-County Electric scholarship in the future.

The Peacocks have impressed Sue Beal, manager of communications and public relations for Tri-County. "These are three very smart women, and we're so glad they have taken advantage of the programs we offer. Donna should be very proud. She sets a good example, and she supports her daughters."

Judging for Bright Ideas grants, Tri-County Electric Scholarships and seats on the Rural Electric Youth Tour are done independently. Beal says that no one realized that three members of the same family had benefited from Tri-County programs in the same year until it was all said and done.

Tri-County's commitment to its community is real. When the nearby town of Mt. Olive needed help building a park, Tri-County offered help. The co-op dug all the holes needed for the park and trimmed the trees, even though Tri-County does not supply electric power to the town of Mt. Olive itself. The town responded by publicly honoring the co-op and its employees.

Tri-County has adopted the Ronald McDonald House in Greenville as a cause and invited co-op members to help, too. For the past four years, the co-op has printed a wish list of items in its newsletter on behalf of the Ronald McDonald House. Co-op members are invited to bring the listed items to its annual meeting (on Nov. 9 this year at Mt. Olive College). Tri-County members have responded generously. Co-op employees recently served a barbecue dinner to the

families staying at the Ronald McDonald House because they saw a need. This genuine concern for the community and willingness to become involved starts at the top with longtime General Manager Mike Davis, who himself joined the Rural Electric Youth Tour when he was in high school. "When you reach out to help someone, like those families at the Ronald McDonald House, you realize how fortunate you are. It also lets employees see first-hand what they can do in the community." Davis praises his cooperative staff for their hard work, compassion and generosity. "We have 51 employees, and I wouldn't trade a one of them."

Each year Tri-County EMC presents checks and awards for scholarships and Bright Ideas grants over dinner at a local restaurant. Davis congratulates those who are being recognized and talks about the variety of ways the co-op is involved in the community. Donna Peacock first heard about the co-op's Operation RoundUp at one of these dinners. Operation RoundUp invites members to let their electric bills be rounded up to the next dollar, with all money raised going to fund special needs in the community. (The money is not used to pay electric bills.) "All of that money goes into the community. None of it comes back to Tri-County," Davis said. The money has paid the insurance premiums of a terminal cancer patient, bought prescription drugs and hearing aids and funded local Special Olympics events, just to name a few examples. Davis said that the program gets "94 percent participation from our members." Such high participation from the co-op's membership raises money quickly. "We have been able to give back more than \$140,000 to the community over the last 18 months," he said.

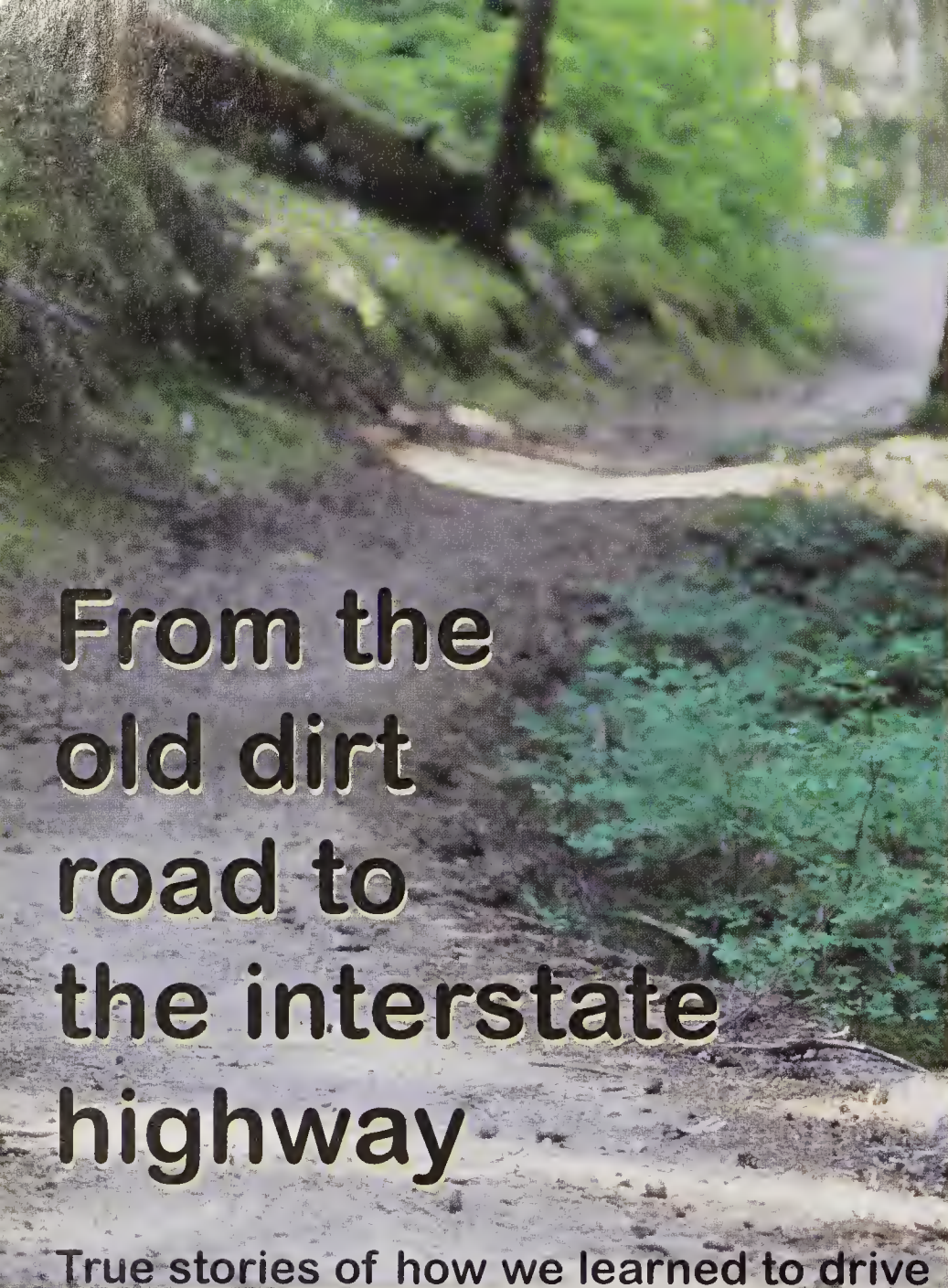
When Donna Peacock realized how much good work her few cents could accomplish, she felt a pang of guilt, wondering if she herself participated in Operation RoundUp. "I said to Mike Davis, 'Gosh, I hope I'm doing that,' and he said, 'Don't worry, you are.'"

Tri-County EMC is a perfect example of the "power of human connections" demonstrated by the nation's Touchstone Energy cooperatives. When you have the support, cooperation and passion of all the players: co-op management, employees, board of directors and members, you can do wonderful things, and on a much larger scale than you might've imagined. Tri-County is making a big difference in a small part of the world. As Haley Peacock says, "You pay Tri-County for your power, but then they pay you right back. It's a great thing."

Kim Whorton Tripp, former associate editor of Carolina Country, lives in southern Wake County.

BUY A COOKBOOK, help a student

Tri-County EMC 60th anniversary cookbooks are still available. All proceeds benefit the Tri-County Electric Scholarship Fund. The book contains more than 300 recipes submitted by the co-op's members. To order the 194-page, 3-ring binder cookbook, send a \$12 check or money order (includes shipping and handling) to Tri-County Electric Membership Corporation, P.O. Box 130, Dudley, NC 28333. Be sure to include your return mailing address. For more information, you can call the Tri-County EMC at (919) 735-2611, or visit the Web site at www.fcemc.com.



From the old dirt road to the interstate highway

True stories of how we learned to drive

I attended a AAA Carolinas driver improvement class recently, because I thought it was a good idea. (So did the attorney who is representing me on a speeding violation that I still believe was not exactly my fault.) About a dozen of us students sat politely in a classroom reviewing the rules of the road while the summer Saturday outside could not have been prettier. But I did learn some rules I'd not known before and noted some advice that makes sense, too. For example, it's best to ignore a driver who cuts you off, because either he did it on purpose or by accident, and whatever harassment you give in return will make him mad. Also, the guy tailgating you might be a volunteer firefighter or an emergency room physician who really needs to get there, so tap your brakes once lightly, or just let him by. The safest driving position is to sit 10 inches from the steering wheel and clutch the wheel at 7 o'clock and 4 o'clock. The instructor also said that speeders typically are good drivers, because they're always checking their mirrors.

So this month we publish some great stories you sent in about how you learned to drive. This was a popular subject, and we received many more entries than we can publish. Thanks to everyone who sent in stories. Next month we'll run your stories on "The Dumbest Thing I Ever Did." (Deadline was Sept. 15.) For the other themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series, see page 18.

— Michael E.C. Gery

The hill helped

Growing up on a mill hill in Cowpens, S.C., was hard on a family of 10, but we always had enough to eat and shoes on our feet. My daddy left the mill to drive for Carolina Freight in North Carolina. He was away for days at a time. If we went anywhere, we walked. So he bought an old blue Plymouth and parked it in our dirt drive, which was on a small incline. It was like an invitation to whoever wanted to learn how to drive.

At age 11 (and the middle child), I backed that car up and down that drive every day. My brothers and sisters were in there with me. Soon, I was driving around the mill hill and even up town. A quarter's worth of gas went a long ways back then. Some times we had to push, but we had a lot of fun.

Lucy Brown Hartman
Waco
Rutherford EMC

Slow, but lots of pulling power

My father never owned a car in his life. I was raised on the farm with a horse and wagon as the only means of transportation. This I learned to drive at an early age.

When I was in high school, the bus driver would let me ride to the end of his route, and after all the students were off the bus he would let me sit beside him and change the gears for him. Some times he would not have the clutch all the way in when I tried to change the gears, and other times I would not get the right gear he needed.

I was maybe 16 years old when a neighbor made a tractor out of a Model A Ford. He placed a truck worm gear rear end under this to give it a slow speed and lots of pulling power. I started going with him to the woods to haul in his wood. I guess he felt sorry for me and asked if I wanted to drive. From then on I hauled in his wood just to get to drive the tractor.

I finished high school in June 1940 and went to work in a furniture factory. I received my driver's license the week before I bought my first car on Saturday, first of March, 1941. On Saturday night I drove to my girlfriend's house. We were riding around when I was stopped by a patrolman and given a lecture about driving too slow on the highway. I made him a promise I would never get caught for driving too slow again. Nor have I been caught for driving too fast. At the age of 80, I think that's pretty good.

George C. Glover
Lenoir
Blue Ridge Electric

Women drivers

When I was 16, I thought cars with stick shifts were cool. Not only did I decide that I would learn to drive with a straight drive, but somehow I even talked my parents into letting me buy a straight-drive car for my first car.

After my older brother attempted unsuccessfully to teach me, my father stepped in. I already knew the basics; it was the clutch that I seemed to be having problems with. My father was very smart, and I figured surely he could put gear shifting into perspective for me. After much frustration, however, and a few harsh words (not from him), I began to think I must be an idiot.

But then, at my mother's suggestion, I let her show me. To my delight (and everyone else's), I picked it up almost immediately. Her instructions were all so clear, and she made it all seem so easy.

I then realized that I wasn't an idiot. I now realize 20 years later that men still have communication problems.

*Cynthia Fisher
Monroe*

Union Power Cooperative

On Uncle Payton's road

I learned to drive in the early 50's on an old dirt road in Sampson County. Uncle Payton, who lived down the road from us, was my teacher, and, yes, he was a good teacher.

Each day I would watch for him as he drove home from one of his neighborly visits. Upon seeing him, I would run to the road and flag him down, knowing I would have to walk back home.

Bringing the old truck to a stop, he'd ask, "What do you want? I ain't got time to mess around." All the while he would be moving over so I could climb behind the steering wheel.

He then began his instruction: 1. Start off slow – give her a little gas as you let out the clutch. 2. EASY ON THE GEARS! Push in the clutch when you change them. 3. Hold this thing in the ruts. If we get out in the sand, we'll be stuck. 4. Watch for traffic. Give your hand signal when stopping, slowing or turning.

Reaching his house, I'd say, "Thanks, Uncle Payton. I'll watch for you again tomorrow." Then I would start my walk back home.

The old road is now paved. And because of his willingness to share his land, several family members now reside on this road, which was so RIGHTLY named the Payton Daniels Road.

*Faye D. Williams
Salemburg
South River EMC*

Designated driver

When I was a new, young, inexperienced driver in rural North Carolina, my father often took me on his little "driving lessons." They were on old country roads, many of which were dirt. I remember one, where he allowed me to drive to my Uncle Robert's house in a neighboring county. Uncle Robert was a small-time bootlegger, and it didn't occur to me then, but I never saw Daddy go there alone. I was his designated driver.

We would leave about 6 o'clock at night. We were in an old, broken down, 40-something Studabaker convertible. The only way to crank it was to roll it off. So with a big shove down the driveway from Uncle Robert, we were on our way. During one trip, Daddy went to sleep, so I was nervous. Out of nowhere came an old farm truck on the wrong side of the road. I slammed on the brakes and skidded around, and a tomato fell off the truck and onto Daddy's lap. The sudden stop caused the car to

cut off. Not being sure what to do, I tried to roll it off myself. I pushed it down a big hill, and it took off by itself and crashed into old man Wilson's barn. Daddy woke up and saw the tomato juice and thought it was blood. He went to screaming, cussing and crying.

Over the next two weeks, I got very tired from working on the barn damage, and thanks to Daddy's belt, I couldn't sit down for at least three weeks.

*Neil Thompson
Dallas
Rutherford EMC*

With Betty and the boys

The person who taught me to drive had to be the bravest one around. I was 22 years old and very pregnant, about five months along. I had never learned to drive anything but a mule.

This person was my sister-in-law Betty. She had had her license for some time. So she offered to help me.

Yes, she was brave. At this time, she was expecting her first child and was about seven months pregnant. She would come to my home. We would stow my two little boys —ages 28 months and 19 months— in the back seat of our car, and away we would go.

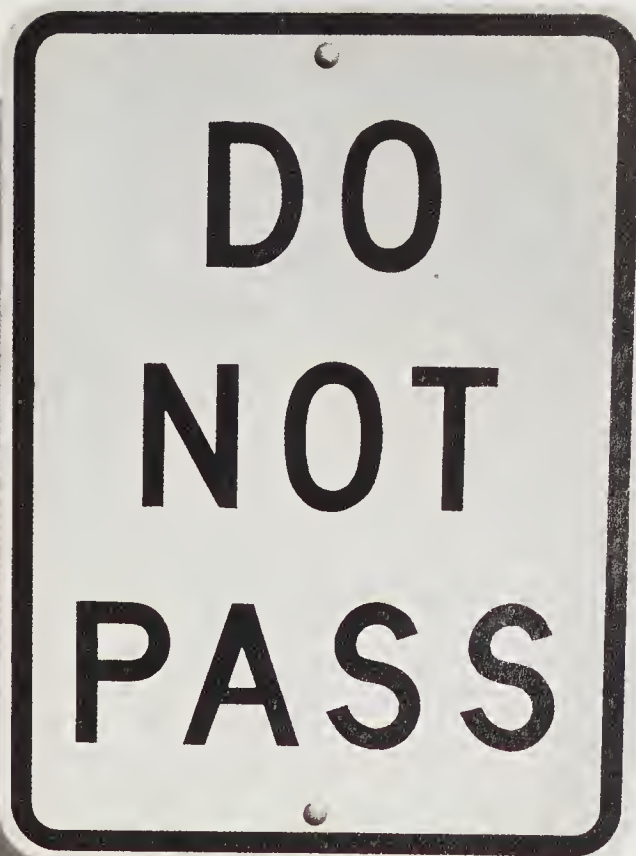
Did you know that those old crank handles for car windows made good toys for 2-year-olds? The two toddlers were constantly rolling down windows.

But off we would go – two very pregnant women and two very lively little boys. I learned well and have been forever grateful to Betty. She gave me a gift that has lasted a lifetime.

I'll always remember one thing. Once after I received my N.C. driver's license, I commented to her over the telephone that it was raining and I thought I would not go out while it was raining. Betty told me, "If every time it rains you change your plans, you will never go anywhere."

Thanks Betty. You're the greatest instructor ever!

*Carolyn Dixon Fox
Washington
Tideland EMC*



Nice guy

When I was 17, my boyfriend taught me how to drive stick shift. We were on a trail road out in the country, and we had a flat. Naturally, I thought he would change it. Instead, he got out, sat on a rock and said, "You fix it. If you're going to drive, you need to know how to change a tire."

We have been happily married for 63 years. He is disabled now, and I have to do all the driving.

Rita Heiler
Canton
Haywood EMC



Born to drive

Driving just comes naturally to my family. Mama and Daddy taught me early that if you have a tank of gas and a set of wheels, the open road can cure any problem.

I can still hear the engine of Daddy's motorcycle revving as he scooted across our lawn, preparing for a Saturday morning adventure. And I still remember Mama stomping outside with keys and pocketbook in hand when the stress of being "Supermom" had simply become too much. Taking a brief drive always seemed to lift her spirits and to clear her head. Now that I am grown, I realize just how much I have become like her.

Needless to say, by the age of 5, I had already maneuvered my Big Wheel around our carport, removed the training wheels from my bike, and, out of curiosity, had driven my daddy's truck into the wall of our local gas station. Fortunately, he quickly sensed my urgent need for wheels. I HAD to drive. It made no difference that I was still in kindergarten.

I'll never forget the day my daddy unloaded a big surprise from his

truck for his little girl. As he gently placed it on the dewy, summer grass, I squealed with childish anticipation at the sight of my first four-wheeler -- a miniature orange Suzuki with matching orange helmet. I smile thinking back. This four-wheeler was the smallest you could buy with an actual engine.

I instantly fell in love with driving, but only after a couple of lesson-learning crashes. First, I skidded into our picnic table and then drove right into the prickly bush along our driveway. It didn't take long for me to make my turns more smoothly, and I enjoyed several summers burning up the trails through our woods.

Eventually I graduated to a larger four-wheeler and then to a convertible VW on my 16th birthday. However, the crucial skills that I had proven at the DMV had been over a decade in the making. I did take some Sunday afternoon drives down long, wash-board-rattling dirt roads with my mama like other teenagers typically do, but she and my daddy had taught me how to drive long before those dirt-road treks. They were wise to help me hone my driving skills from a tender age, and they were wise enough to know that practice truly does make perfect.

Kennette R. Lawrence
Boone
Blue Ridge Electric

Still learning

My dad taught me to drive about three years ago, when I was 11. We live on 60 acres, so I'd drive back down to the old hog sheds or around the field. First, he taught me how to drive the station wagon. We sold that, so I learned to drive our Suburban, then Daddy's little car. Now he's trying to teach me stick shift on the truck. That's the hard part, but Daddy's usually pretty good at being patient.

All in all, I'd say, yes, the teacher was pretty good, and he's still my teacher. I'm far from being a good driver, but we're working on it.

Katie Beth Groover, 14
Franklinton
Wake EMC

SEND us your best.

Earn \$50.

Here are the themes in our "Nothing Could Be Finer" series. Send us your stories and pictures. You don't have to be the best writer. Just tell it from your heart.

December 2002

"Advice for Getting Older."

How can we age gracefully?

Deadline: Oct. 15

2003

January 2003

"The Finest Moment in North Carolino Sports"

Was it in basketball, racing, golf, horse-shoes?

Deadline: Nov. 15

July 2003

"Why I Went Back to School"

What was your most meaningful adult education experience?

Deadline: May 15

February 2003

"My Favorite Technology"

Kids writing only. Anyone under age 18.

Deadline: Dec. 15

August 2003

"The Funniest Story I Ever Heard"

True, or not so true.

Deadline: June 15

March 2003

"My Tips for Good Gardening"

Tell us the technique that makes your garden grow.

Deadline: Jan. 15

September 2003

"My Favorite Photo"

Our annual photo gallery of North Carolina people and places.

Deadline: July 15

April 2003

"Best North Carolina Vacation -- Off the Beaten Path"

Where, why and send pictures.

Deadline: Feb. 15

October 2003

"Why I Like My Electric Cooperative"

Is a cooperative different than other utilities?

Deadline: August 15

May 2003

"We Actually Sow a Wild. . ."

Tell us about what you sow in the North Carolina wilderness.

Deadline: March 15

November 2003

"The Finest Neighbor I Ever Knew"

Tell us why and send a photo.

Deadline: Sept. 15

June 2003

"The Finest Food in North Carolina"

If you had to pick one North Carolina specialty, what would it be and why?

Deadline: April 15

December 2003

"How to Live a Long and Happy Life"

Do you know an older person who sets a good example for staying healthy and happy? Send a photo, too.

Deadline: Oct. 15

The Rules

1. Approximately 200 words or less.
2. Only one entry per household per month.
3. Photos are welcome. Digital photos must be 300 dpi and actual size.
4. E-mail or typed, if possible. Otherwise, make it legible.
5. Include your name, e-mail address, mailing address and phone number.
6. If you want your entry returned, please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. (We will not return others.)
7. We pay \$50 for each submission published.
8. We will post on our Web site more entries than we publish, but can't pay for those submissions. (Let us know if you don't agree to this.)
9. Send to Nothing Finer, Carolina Country, 3400 Sumner Blvd., Raleigh, NC 27616. Or by e-mail: carolina.country@ncemcs.com. Or through the Web site: www.carolinacountry.com

Depending on Driver's Ed

When my first child turned 15, I promised her I would not fuss all the time about her driving. So the day she was 15, she went to get her driver's permit. The ride home seemed to take forever. She and I talked about everything but her driving.

We are from a small community with a general store at a crossroads that makes up Main Street. When she approached this crossroads, there were several friends, including her grandfather sitting in front of the store. She waved at them, not stopping for the stop sign. Thankfully, there was not anything coming!

I said, "Do you realize you did not stop for the stop sign? Do you know what could have happened?"

"Nothing," she replied. "He would have used his brake on that side of the car."

"No, dear," I said. "You are no longer with the Driver's Ed teacher. I was referring to the policeman."

Jennifer Wood
Maury
Pitt & Greene EMC

The minister's touch

After my husband died, I had to learn to drive. I got a permit. Called a driving school. Got a hip young instructor. The car was always full of students. She was always picking one up or taking one home. One day at peak hour traffic, she wanted me to go, after only three lessons. I didn't want to go. She was so angry, she didn't come or answer my calls.

So I called another school. The teacher I got was a minister. He was an excellent teacher. He only took one student at a time. Being 69 years old, that was much better for me. In no time, he took me to get my license. Passed and for 12 years I've enjoyed freedom to come and go. Who says you can't teach an old dog new tricks? Praise the Lord!

Hazel B. Kimrey
Denton
EnergyUnited

tied a rope on the back of it so I would not lose control. My dad likes me going dirt-bike riding with him. I love my dad.

Dustin Gross
Troutman
EnergyUnited



Driving Miss Tiffanie

Before my father died, the only good time I remember was when he taught me how to drive. I was like 8 or 9 years old. My dad would let me sit on his lap. I would hold onto the steering wheel while he pushed the gas pedal. He was a really great driver. He used to drive trucks. I will always have that memory in my heart from when I learned how to drive.

Tiffanie Emanuel, 13
Fayetteville
South River EMC

Under control

I am 8. My dad taught me how to drive when I was 6 years old. First, I learned how to drive a go-cart. Then I learned how to ride a mini-bike. The first time I rode my mini-bike, my dad

"Studio Moon" 99

by BOB TIMBERLAKE

THE BOB TIMBERLAKE GALLERY is pleased to announce Bob Timberlake's most recent time-limited reproduction entitled "Studio Moon". This beautiful reproduction is being offered as a special time-limited edition with orders being accepted from September 16th through November 16th, 2002.

Produced in offset lithography*, "Studio Moon" has an image area of 18 1/2" x 25 1/2" on 100% rag paper stock that measures 24" x 30". The issue price for the offset reproduction is \$250.00 plus \$15.00 shipping. (North Carolina residents will need to add 6.5% state sales tax of \$16.25). The edition size will be determined at the end of the reservation period. Note: 75 artist proofs and 50 giclee proofs will be included in the edition with giclee proofs being offered at 750.00 each. Please contact The Gallery for further details.



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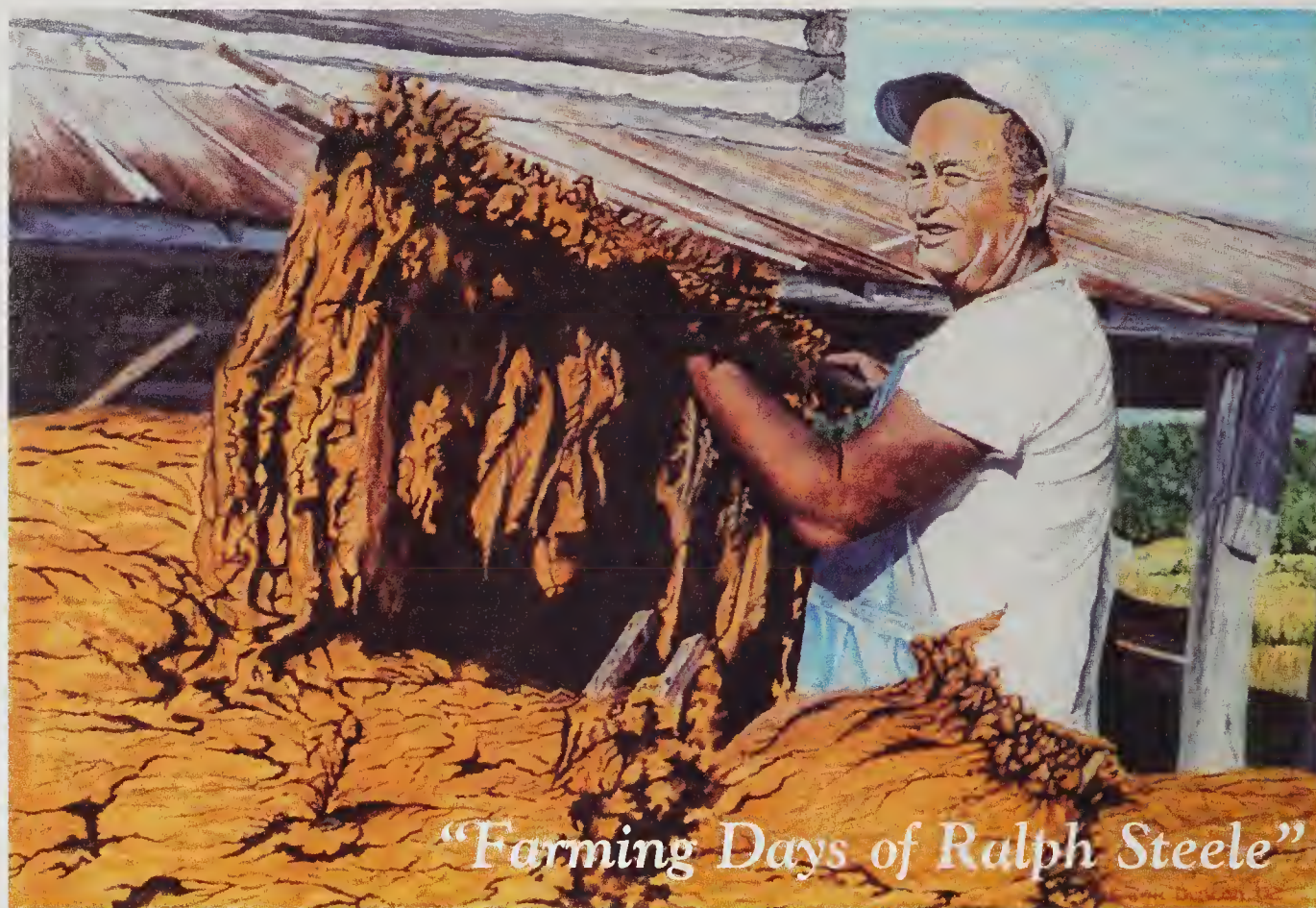
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"Farming Days of Ralph Steele"

Art by Frank Duncan

Illustrator Frank Duncan doesn't like to call himself an artist. "An artist looks at what nature has done and interprets it in a painting. An illustrator looks at what nature has done and tries to mimic it. Who can improve on what God has done?"

But Duncan does enjoy capturing the moment or mood in a painting. "Like in the fall," he says, "when the rains stop and the clouds are breaking up, but they are still dark and ominous and the sun breaks through, and illuminates the fall foliage."

Frank Duncan, who lives in eastern Stokes County, near Madison, has been painting on and off since he was a teenager. An early mentor was his high school teacher "Mrs. Rogers." Duncan worked for many years as a machine drafter and designer before he began a professional art career five years ago. He converted an old log pack house into a working studio, and is building an addition with timber cut from his land. His favorite artists are Norman Rockwell and North Carolina's Mel Steele. He models clay, but prefers to paint, using gouache (an opaque watercolor) along with transparency watercolors for most of his works.

Some of his other prints include "First Tracks at Seven Island Bridge," a snowy scene showing the last suspension bridge in Stokes County, and "Canning Corn," which depicts an active moonshine still. He has been working in oil for a detailed Civil War scene that he says may have occurred in nearby Danbury in 1863, and he plans to release it this month.

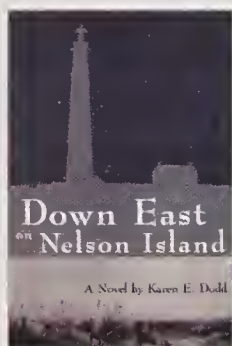
A North Carolina native and member of the EnergyUnited cooperative, Duncan also enjoys working with youth at his church. A vintage car fan, he is restoring a 1937 Oldsmobile and hopes to drive it with his son to the young man's college graduation.

"Farming Days of Ralph Steele" is a portrait of the late Ralph Steele lifting tobacco at his farm near Sandy Ridge. Duncan was commissioned by Mr. Steele's daughter, Margie Glidewell, to create it. He worked from a black and white photograph. "Farming Days of Ralph Steele" is available in 9.75-inch by 13.6-inch prints for \$35, plus \$5 shipping.

— Karen Olson House

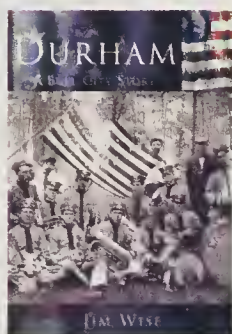
Contact Frank Duncan at:
(336) 871-2921
email: isyou@vnet.net
1640 Duggins Road
Madison, NC 27025

ON THE BOOKSHELF



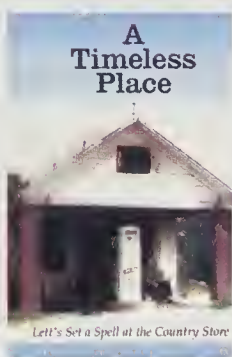
"Down East on Nelson Island"

Karen Dodd's new book depicts small town island life and explores the importance of community, family and love. Set on fictitious Nelson Island in Carteret County, 8-year-old Rachel is left to spend the summer with her grandfather. Days spent clamming and cruising the waterways bring them close and allow for new discoveries and friendships to be made. Dodd also wrote "Carolina Comfort," which won the Paul Green Multimedia Award. The hardcover book costs \$15.95, plus shipping, at bookstores or through Pentland Press, Inc. Phone: (800) 948-2786.



"A Bull City Story"

Author Jim Wise takes his readers on an adventurous 300-year journey of his colorful hometown in "Durham: A Bull City Story." The book chronicles Durham's history in robust imagery and vivid, often humorous, narrative. More than 100 rare photographs depicting scenes from the turn of the century grace the book, along with stories about the city's inhabitants. The softcover volume is part of publisher Arcadia's Making of America series, which celebrates historic contributions made by communities across the U.S. The book is \$24.99 and can be purchased at bookstores, Arcadia's Web site www.arcadiapublishing.com or (800) 313-2665.



"A Timeless Place"

Pull up a rocker and visit "A Timeless Place, Lett's Set a Spell at the Country Store," a book about a bygone era where family values and tall tales abound. North Carolina author AlexSandra Lett centers her book on Grandpa's country store, the social center of Buckhorn community in rural North Carolina. The hardcover book, published by Southern Books & Talks, is \$19.95. Visit www.atimelessplace.com. Or call (919) 777-9362.



The Loomis Fargo theft

The crime was breathtaking. In 1997, a man loaded millions of dollars from a Charlotte warehouse onto a cart and fled. Did he get away? Did this crime pay? "Heist! The \$17 Million Loomis Fargo Theft" details the true story of an unlikely gang of ordinary people who committed the second-largest theft in America. Written by former Charlotte Observer reporter Jeff Diamant, the book is published by John E. Blair. It is \$24.95 in hardcover. Email byerly@blairpub.com or call (800) 222-9796.



"North Carolina: People and Environments"

Complete with 2002 Census data, this second edition examines the state's geography through illustrations, maps, photos and statistical tables. Authors Ole Gade, Arthur B. Rex, James E. Young and L. Baker Perry address how we are affected by the natural environment and how we, in turn, influence change. They have devised a comprehensive system of regions and interested readers should be able to find the details to create a geography of their locale. The book by Parkway Publishers is \$44.50 (softcover) or \$64.50 (hardcover). Visit www.parkwaypublishers.com or call (800) 821-9155.

Dolls of yesteryear

More than 1,200 antique toys will be on display at Old Salem's newest museum, opening Nov. 16. The toys span eras from 225 A.D. to the 1920s, with a collection of rare Moravian toys owned by Salem residents. Visitors will find dollhouses, wooden firearms, painted carousels, squeak toys, puzzles and more. The online store of Old Salem is selling an adaptation of the original Maggie-Bessie dolls. This 16-inch doll is cotton, machine washable, and costs \$22.95.

Visit www.oldsalem.org or call (800) 822-5151.



New from Wildlife Resources



Hunting, trapping and fishing are cherished traditions in North Carolina. Preserving these traditions includes the safe, ethical use of resources. The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission offers a free booklet: "North Carolina Inland Fishing, Hunting & Trapping Regulations Digest." To request it, write North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, 1722 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-1722. The commission has also issued its 2003 Wildlife Calendar featuring wildlife art, fishing days, moon phase information and a detailed almanac. The October selection (shown) was painted by Carl Brenders and is called "Trick or Treat." The 10 1/4 by 14-inch calendar sells for \$6, with discounts for larger orders. Visit www.ncwildlife.com or call (919) 662-4377.

Lodge furniture to bear rugs

Cabin Fever is a Blowing Rock store that features wildlife and outdoor theme items, including lodge-inspired furniture, picture frames, antler lamps, bed sheets and comforters, kitchenware, hardware, bear rugs and humorous plaques. Visit www.thecabinfeversite.com or call (828) 295-0520.

Western N.C. artists

Located in Banner Elk, the Art Cellar Gallery represents many visual artists in western North Carolina. With three floors of exhibition space, displays include a selection of oil paintings, watercolors, acrylics, sculpture, painted and stainless steel, wood, stone and bronze, as well as hand-fired and glazed pottery and blown glass. The gallery also offers one of the largest collections of Outside/Primitive/Folk artists in the Southeast, along with appraisal and interior design services.

Visit www.artcellaronline.com or call (828) 898-5175.

"Don Gibson's Greatest Hits"

Shelby native Don Gibson was a soda jerk and dishwasher before being discovered in a Knoxville club singing "Sweet Dreams." His 1958 recording of "Oh Lonesome Me" won major awards, as did "I Can't Stop Loving You" and "Sea Of Heartbreak." Gibson has claimed many classics and was inducted in the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1991. For a compilation, check out "Don Gibson's 20 Greatest Hits" CD. Visit www.earfloss.com or call your local music store.

Free Cape Fear guide includes aquarium

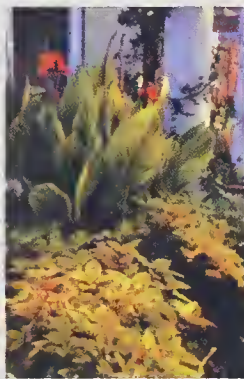


The North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher is newly expanded, with aquatic life of the Cape Fear River and wetlands, creatures of the coastal waters near the river's mouth, and life in the open ocean beyond. New areas include the Cape Fear Conservatory, which interprets the regions' ponds and features snakes, alligators and carnivorous plants, and Cape Fear Shoals, which features

sharks, eels, sea turtles and other sea creatures. The facility, located at Kure Beach, includes interactive exhibits, classrooms, an auditorium, and a gift shop. Outside, visitors can enjoy nature trails, garden boardwalks, and pond side observation decks with telescopes. For a free Visitors Guide for the area, visit www.cape-fear.nc.us or call (800) 222-4757.



Botanical garden festival



You can purchase a wide variety of flora and fauna, learn what to plant this fall or stuff a grinning scarecrow at the annual "Celebrate Fall! Plant and Craft Sale" at Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden on Oct. 12. The Belmont non-profit organization will feature a hay maze, pumpkin painting and hayrides, with master gardeners on hand to answer your questions. The gift shop sells garden apparel, books on Southeast horticulture, children's toys and pottery. The garden is also offering classes throughout October and November on floral arranging, silk painting, herbal soap making, holiday centerpieces, ornamental grasses and consumer pesticide safety. Visit www.dsbg.org or call (704) 825-4490.

Halloween tricks on the Web

There is a great selection of free instructions for Halloween craft projects on the Web. An all-crafts Web site includes how-to information for costumes, flags, wind socks and other decorations, with links to order books such as "Halloween Pumpkins & Parties: 101 Spooktacular Ideas." The site also includes fun projects for kids' activities and other holidays. Visit www.allcrafts.net/halloween.htm

An 1840 Carolina village

The Catawba County Historical Association in Newton sells a three-part documentary video series about a collection of 19th century log cabins south of Hickory. Titled "The 1840 Carolina Village," the video explores the modern re-creation of the 19th-century town. The series profiles the founder, Dr. Robert Hart, examines craft demonstrations such as smithing and spinning, and concludes with a celebration featuring period music by artisans who made their own instruments. The video sells for \$49.95. The association is selling tickets for its upcoming Hart Square day, a celebration of the site with period costumes, craft demonstrations and old-time cooking, to be held Oct. 26. Tickets are \$20. Visit www.catawbahistory.org or call (828) 465-0383.

Trees that resist disease

The cool days of autumn are the best time for planting trees and shrubs. Every year, the North Carolina Forest Service sells seedlings that have been genetically improved to yield high-quality wood. These trees are from orchard-grown seeds selected from superior North Carolina trees and reported to be more resistant to insects and disease. Genetically improved species, including longleaf pine, white pine, Virginia Pine, pond pine, sycamore and Fraser fir, are available, along with many other popular trees. Visit www.dfr.state.nc.us or call toll-free (888) NC TREES.

Outer Banks posters, maps and more



This new Outer Banks shop is located in historical Manteo, across from the waterfront. Items for sale include limited edition prints, maps, souvenirs and specialty items such as ships-in-a-bottle, clocks, lighthouse mugs and puzzles. The shop's staff can also find hard-to-find prints on request. Featured photographers and artists include Jerry Exum, Ray Matthews, Kathleen Denis, Tom Draper, Alan Cheek, Susan Vaughan, Steve Hanks, and Jerry Bean. Steve Hanks painted (shown) "Castles in the Sand," a print sold by the shop. Visit www.outerbanksposters.com or call (800) 642-0063.

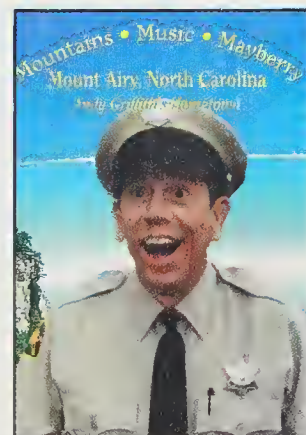
Elizabeth Cotten's folk songs



Fans of traditional American music can enjoy the complete reissue of Elizabeth Cotten's "Freight Train and other North Carolina Folk Songs and Tunes." Cotten's deeply personal compositions and self-taught, upside-down style have made her one of the most original guitar and banjo players. Her immortal "Freight Train," along with "Babe It Aint No Lie" and "Wilson Rag," are included in this endearing classic. The CD, produced by Smithsonian Folkways, is \$15. Visit www.folkways.si.edu or call (800) 410-9815.

New Mount Airy visitors guide

The city of Mount Airy in Surry County has issued a new, free brochure for day-trippers and tourists. The 32-page brochure features "Mayberry" attractions, music, mountain amenities and historical sites. Mount Airy is home to the Snappy Lunch, the Bright Leaf Drive-In Theatre and the Andy Griffith Museum. Visit www.visitmayberry.com or call (800) 948-0949.



Visit the Carolina Country Store

Do you have something to stock on the Carolina Country Store shelves? Send information and pictures to our storekeeper through the Web site or at Carolina.country@ncemcs.com

The store is open 24 hours a day, everyday, at www.carolinacountry.com

We decided to become foster parents

By Penney Elliott



Grady and Penney Elliott are foster parents in Burke County.

My husband and I have been married for 14 years. During these years we have been well aware of the fact that there would never be any children between us. For a long time we thought that meant we would never have children in our home. How wrong we turned out to be.

In the early years of our marriage, we went through fertility treatment where we found ourselves on a never-ending emotional roller coaster. Not being the kind of people who give up without a fight, we went straight to a private adoption agency and learned we would have to wait for more than three years. We decided we would resign ourselves to the fact that we would probably never have children. But there seemed to be a never-ending emptiness within our hearts and our home.

I began working as a substitute teacher, an inspiring job in itself. I'll never forget one of my first days as a substitute teacher, because it changed my life. I was filling in for a teacher at George Hildebran School when I found myself sitting across from a small, frail-looking boy at lunch. He had a slightly shaved head, no front teeth, and seemed deep in thought for someone so small and young. Like most children, he began to rattle from one subject to another, but he kept centering on the fact that he was in foster care. He told me how he was living with his grandfather in Morganton. What caught my heart was how someone so young could portray so much emotion.

As the months passed by, I could not forget that child. The conversation made me aware that there are a lot of children who would never go back home. I had finally realized exactly what I wanted to do. I wanted to become a foster parent.

After my husband and I had a lengthy conversation — you know the type where you go over the pros and cons so you can make a well informed, thought-out decision — we decided to contact the Burke County Social Services. They informed us of the steps we would need to take to become foster parents. Yes, there is some work involved in becoming a foster parent, but it is worth the effort. For once in 14 years I can actually say that I know what it feels like to wake up with children in our home knowing that we are responsible for shaping their lives, sharing our values, and sharing our love. I am happier and more satisfied than I have ever been in my life.

Who can become a foster parent?

In North Carolina you can be a foster parent if you:

- Are between the ages of 21 and 65
- Are in good physical and mental health and pass a TB skin test
- Have a telephone and access to transportation
- Have been married for at least one year. Single parents may also be considered
- Have adequate income to meet the needs of present family members without relying on the foster child's board payment
- Provide each child with their own personal bedroom space
- Your home passes a fire and safety inspection
- After fingerprinting, pass a criminal check - conducted locally, through the SBI, and through the FBI
- Participate in and complete 30 hours of pre-service training
- Complete an application form detailing your family profile

Can foster parents work outside the home?

Yes, working individuals can be licensed as foster parents.

How long is a foster care placement?

A child's placement may be for as short as an overnight stay or longer than a year.

Do I have to complete additional training once I have become a licensed foster parent?

Yes, foster parents are required to complete 10 hours of training each year.

Do I have to take any child that is sent to me?

No. You have the right to accept or reject any placement.

How often do I have to renew my license?

North Carolina requires foster parents to renew their licenses yearly.

What is the first step I need to take to get into the foster care program?

If you are interested in becoming a foster parent, call the county Department of Social Services in the county in which you live.

Information is courtesy of the North Carolina Foster Parents Association. NCFPA is a statewide association of foster, adoptive and kinship parents, child advocates and others who work together to support the safety, well-being, and permanent placement of the 11,000 children in our state's foster care system. For information, contact NCFPA at 4701-1 Wrightsville Ave., Wilmington, NC 28403.

E-mail: FSNSEC@wilmington.net. Web site: www.ncfosterparents.org



Cotton COUNTRY

By Leanne Ely

PHOTOS BY SCOTT ELY

NORTH CAROLINA'S PLANTED COTTON ACREAGE IS AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL SINCE 1937.

There was a time when just about every family in rural North Carolina would grow cotton, right next to the vegetable garden or in an adjacent field. Being the sole cash crop for most rural families, cotton served as an integral part of their economy and provided the flour, sugar and whatever else families couldn't raise or make themselves.

Cotton was so important in those days that school would be dismissed during the harvest season so children could be home to help with the picking. But in the 1950s, things began to change slowly and a good many of those bountiful cotton fields gave way to urban sprawl. The culture changed, too, and the need for a cash crop for domestic survival was no longer a necessity.

But the change was more than cultural.

For cotton farmers, machines picked up where human labor left off. Cotton is picked by machine now. No longer is the cotton ginned by hand either—machines can do that, too.

Statewide, cotton production has shown a dramatic increase in recent years. North Carolina farms now produce more than 1 million acres of cotton, showing a 53 percent increase since 1997, according to the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. Planted acreage is at the highest level since 1937.

While the rise in production is credited in part to improved marketing and promotion, the U.S. and North Carolina have seen the cotton textile industry migrating overseas. Consumers end up buying imported cotton goods.

"That's what's hurting us," said Wes

Continued on page 26

Above: Robert McDaniel and his brothers grow 200 acres of cotton in eastern Rutherford County.

Morgan, owner of Rolling Hills Gin in New London (Stanly County). "It comes back to us in T-shirts made overseas."

But cotton farming itself is thriving in Stanly County. "In the late 1980s, there were only 300 acres in cotton," said Morgan. "Today, because of the gin and farmers deciding to plant cotton, there are over 12,000 acres of cotton."

CHOOSING AN ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE

When Wes Morgan opened Rolling Hills Gin for business in 1996, he had a choice of which utility would provide the electric power, Duke Power or Union Power Cooperative. "I decided to go with the co-op," he said, "because I could get better service rates and what not from the co-op. We're in the middle of nowhere, and Duke Power is only a mile away, but we chose Union." The gin baled over 30,000 bales of cotton last year and serves seven counties.

For Morgan, getting into cotton began with his uncles. "They had always been farmers and grew corn, soybeans and wheat," he said. "In the late 1980s, my uncles decided to bring cotton back to Stanly County. They wanted to try and see if it would be more profitable than what they grew before. And it was."

And while the Rolling Hills Gin is new to the cotton industry, Colfax Gin in Ellenboro isn't. Owned by the three McDaniel brothers—Samuel, Robert and Joe—the Colfax Gin is a fixture in the eastern part of Rutherford County. "We've always grown cotton," said Joe McDaniel. "Our family has grown cotton for over 100 years. My daddy grew cotton and his granddaddy grew cotton—he was a Civil War soldier."

Today the McDaniel brothers grow 200 acres of cotton. "At one time, Rutherford County grew about 37,000 acres of cotton. That was back in the 30s though. Cleveland County used to be the biggest cotton producer in the state," said Joe McDaniel.

Cotton is typically planted the first week of May. "That's the ideal time," said Mary Lewis, sister to the McDaniels and employed by them since 1974.

After the cotton is planted, it is sprayed for weeds. "The boll weevil eradication program that was begun in the late 70s has made a huge difference," Mary Lewis said. "We don't need to spray insecticides anymore, just herbicides for the weeds. If you see yellow cones on a stick by cotton fields, those are the lures to get the boll weevils."

Wes Morgan agrees. "They don't spray



Jerry Mathis hauling picked cotton at the McDaniel farm.



Inside the Colfax Gin in Ellenboro: a vacuum tube sends the cotton for cleaning (left), and a bale on the scales.

much anymore in Stanly County—maybe 50 percent of the time, but that's for worms. Cotton in our area is a little more unique to other areas in the state. They don't plow it up or disc it when the crop's finished, they just plant right over what's left over from the year before. It's better for the soil, less erosion and environmentally more friendly."

When the cotton is mature, the cotton bolls open to reveal the treasure of white fluffy cotton inside. "We wait until it is all opened up before we pick it," said Mary Lewis. "In the old days, they used to pick it before it was all opened because school would be out and that's what you had to do. But today, we wait until it's all opened up and the machine picks it."

Machines do a great job in getting the cotton, but it's never without "reward," says Wes Morgan. "We've found all kinds of things from picking—old CBs, fence posts, car parts. But the best one was the bottom half of a mannequin. The guy driving the truck stuck the legs up out of the top of this big pile of just-picked cotton. I would have loved to have seen the faces of the people driving behind the truck who saw the legs sticking out the back."

From the fields, the cotton is then transported to the gin where it is "ginned." Ginning involves first removing the debris from the cotton using powerful pipes that clean it. Then it goes to the gin stand where the seed is taken from the cotton. The ginned cotton, called "lint," is then pressed into huge bales weighing nearly 500 pounds. After baling, the giant cotton bundles are wrapped in plastic and shipped to different warehouses all over the state where a cotton broker will ultimately sell them.

With the hundreds of uses of cotton, from blue jeans to cotton balls, from towels to dental floss, it all begins as a seed in the ground. And with the McDaniel brothers in Rutherford County and the Morgans in Stanly County hard at work along with the other cotton farmers and gins in the state, who's to say those shoelaces you're tying didn't start out in North Carolina?

Leanne Ely is the radio talk show host of "Heart of A Woman" and the author of two books, "Healthy Foods" and "The Frantic Family Cookbook." Though currently living in California with her husband, Scott, and two children, her heart belongs in the hills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. She can be reached via email: leanneely@aol.com

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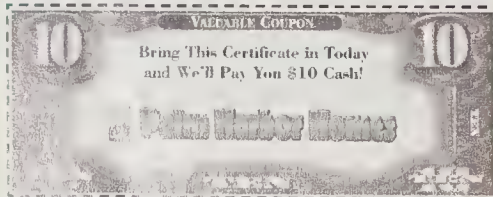
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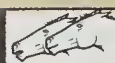
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To go from URBAN to RURAL you must change one letter in each of the two steps. Letters can be rearranged.

U R B A N

— — — — —

R U R A L

math
words

ITS = NUMBER / FUN
613 = 480592 / 784

Each letter in this division puzzle stands for a digit. Can you replace the digits that get the TRAIN out of the DEPOT?

```

      T R A I N
        3
T | D E P O T
  D
  —
    E
    N
  —
  O P
  O P
  —
    O T
    O T
  
```



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This is one of many bits of beach lore told by Raleigh News & Observer columnist Susan Bynum Rountree in her book, "Nags Headers," published in 2001 by John F. Blair, Publisher, Winston-Salem.

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DETECTION**

**T
I
M
E
S
S
Q
U
A
R
E**

Given these simultaneous equations, can you find the value of TIMES? Use the grid to eliminate impossibilities.

$(TI)^2 = MES$ The square of the two-digit number TI is the three-digit number MES.

$T + T = E$
 $I - M = S$
 $M + S = I$
 $E + E = M$
 $S + S = T$

	T	I	M	E	S
9					
8					
7					
6					
5					
4					
3					
2					
1					
0	x	x	x	x	x

Answers on page 32.

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4 7 8 1 2 / 2 = 2 3 9 0 6
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word play: URBAN LUNAR RURAL

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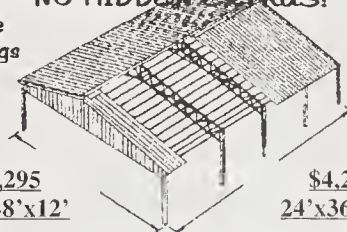


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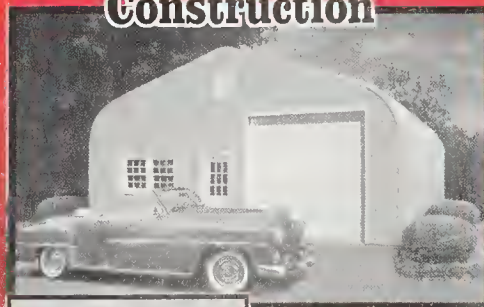
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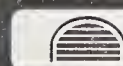
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Oct. 5. Andrews.
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Oct. 5. Hendersonville.
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Oct. 5. Taylorsville.
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Annual Fall Festival

Oct. 5-6. Brasstown.
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Fall Arts Celebration

Oct. 5-31. Burnsville.
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www.yanceychamber.com

Autumn Leaves Festival

Oct. 11-13. Mount Airy.
(800) 948-0949.
www.visitmayberry.com

Cotton Ginning Days

Oct. 11-13. Dallas.
Gaston County Park.
(704) 922-2160.

Mountain Glory Festival

Oct. 12. Marion.
Main Street. Free. (828) 652-2215. www.mtgloryfestival.com

Craft Show

Oct. 12. Murphy.
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Oct. 13. Lenoir.
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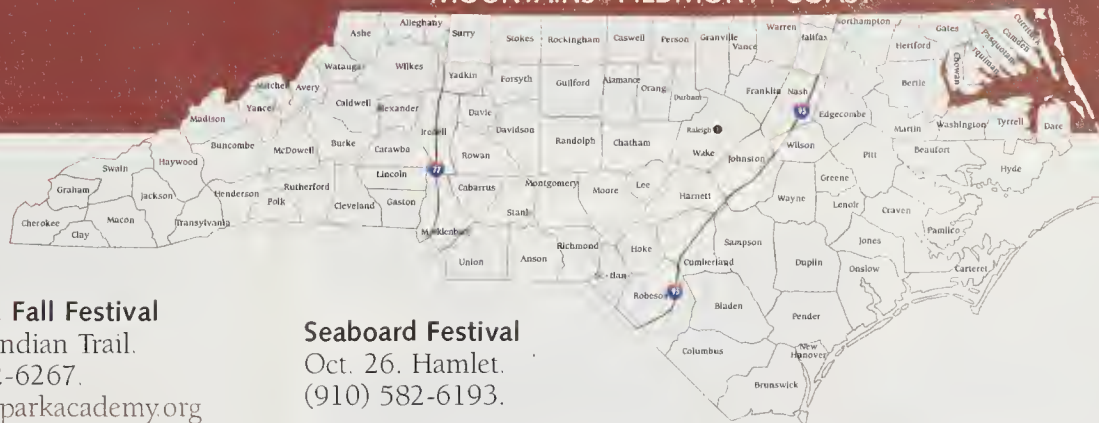
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MOUNTAINS | PIEDMONT | COAST



Quilt Fest

Oct. 4-6. Fayetteville.
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Dixie Classic Fair

Oct. 4-13. Winston-Salem.
(336) 727-2236.

Fall Fine Arts Festival

Oct. 5. Sanford.
(919) 775-8332.

Justice Antique Tractor Show

Oct. 5. Louisburg.
(919) 496-4605.

Harvest Day 2002

Oct. 5. Wake Forest.
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Oct. 6. Raleigh.
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Oct. 8. Wingate.
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Annual Sardine Festival

Oct. 11. Aberdeen.
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Quilt Show

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First Presbyterian Church.
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5K Run & Fall Festival

Oct. 12. Indian Trail.
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Koin-On-ia 2002

Oct. 12. Between Matthews &
Weddington. Fall festival. Free.
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Chatham County Farm Fun Day

Oct. 12. Siler City.
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Annual Holly Arts Festival

Oct. 19. Pinehurst.
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"Powers of Nature." (919) 733-7450. www.naturalsciences.org

Community Day

Oct. 20. Winston-Salem. Museum of
American Art. (336) 725-5325.
www.reynolda.house.org

Halloween Party

Oct. 24. Statesville.
(704) 878-3480.

Horse and Mule Days

Oct. 25-26. Denton.
(336) 859-2755.
www.threshers.com

Seaboard Festival

Oct. 26. Hamlet.
(910) 582-6193.

Antique Tractor Plow Day

Oct. 26. Broadway.
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Farm Harvest Festival

Oct. 26. Aberdeen.
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"The Scarlet Pimpernel"

Oct. 29. Duke University.
(919) 684-4444.

Haunted Train.

Oct. 29-31. Burlington.
(336) 229-3155.

Fall Fireworks

Oct. 31. Burlington
Burlington City Park.
(336) 222-5030.
www.ci.burlington.nc.us

Stevens Center

Ongoing. Winston-Salem.
Oct. 17, "In The Mood" |
Oct. 24, "1964-The Tribute." |
(336) 721-1945.

Discovery Place

Ongoing. Charlotte.
Through Jan 1, "Theme Park:
Universal's Island of Adventure." |
Through Dec. 26, "International
Space Station: The Earth Tour." |
(704) 372-6261.

Charlotte Museum of History

Ongoing. Charlotte.
Through Fall 2002, "War in the
First Person: Soldier's Stories." |
Oct. 19, "Exploring N.C.'s
Unsolved Mysteries." | (704) 568-1774. www.charlottenmuseum.org

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Indian Summer Days

Oct. 3-5. Ahoskie.
Craft show. (252) 332-2042.

Carolina Farm Show

Oct. 3-5. Kinston.
(252) 523-6000.
www.carolinafarmshow.com

The Miser

Oct. 3-6. Wilmington.
Play. Thalian Hall.
(910) 343-3664. www.bigdawgproductions.homestead.com

"My Fair Lady"

Oct. 3-8. Greenville.
East Carolina University.
(252) 328-6829.

Oktoberfest

Oct. 4. New Bern.
Farmer's Market.
(252) 636-1640.

Mid-Atlantic Duck & Deer Expo

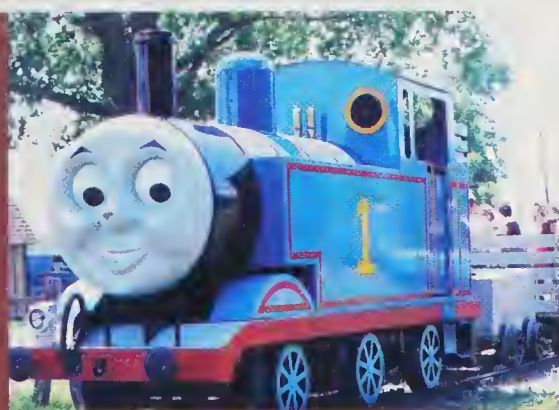
Oct. 4-6. Williamston.
(252) 792-5111.

North Carolina Seafood Festival

Oct. 4-6. Morehead City.
(252) 726-6273.
www.ncseafoodfestival.org

Louise Wells Cameron Art Museum

Oct. 4, Oct. 6. Wilmington.
Films on Birth of American
Modern. (910) 395-5999.
www.cameronmuseum.com



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OCTOBER EVENTS



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Free. (252) 357-0075.

Peanut Festival

Oct. 5. Edenton.
Free. (800) 775-0111.

Riverfest 2002

Oct. 5-6. Wilmington.
(910) 452-6862.
www.wilmingtonriverfest.com

Artrageous

Oct. 6-7. Kill Devil Hills. (252) 473-5558. www.darearts.org

Chowan County Fair

Oct. 8-12. Edenton.
American Legion Fairgrounds.
(800) 775-0111.

Celebrating First Flight

Oct. 10-11. Elizabeth City.
National Center.
(252) 335-1265.

Art Walk

Oct. 11-12. Edenton.
Cotton Street. Free.
(252) 482-1100.

Fine Arts & Crafts Festival

Oct. 11-13. Greenville.

Convention Center.
(910) 326-7222.

MUMfest '02

Oct. 11-13. New Bern.
Crafts, air expo, flower shows.
(252) 638-5781.

Oak Island Celebration

Oct. 12. Oak Island.
Middleton Park. Free.
(910) 278-5518.

www.southport-oakisland.com

Octoberfest

Oct. 12. Edenton.
(252) 482-8005

Scuppernong River Festival

Oct. 12. Columbia.
(252) 796-1371.
www.tyrrellchamber.com

Mullet Festival

Oct. 12. Swansboro.
(910) 353-0241.

LISTING INFORMATION

Deadline for Dec: Oct. 25 | Deadline for Jan: Nov. 25

Please include title, date(s), location, phone number and/or Web site url
Photos (300 dpi or hard copies) are welcome.

Send notices to: Carolina Compass, P.O. Box 27306, Raleigh, NC 27611
| Fax: (919) 878-3970 | e-mail: carolina.country@ncemcs.com

Draft & Mule Field Festival

Oct. 12. Elizabeth City.
(252) 331-2220

Knotts Island Wildlife Festival

Oct. 12-13. Knotts Island.
(252) 429-3317.

Pleasure Island Festival

Oct. 12-13. Fort Fisher.
(910) 458-8434.

Coastal Carolina Fair & Expo

Oct. 17-26. New Bern.
Fairgrounds. (252) 636-0303.
www.ccjaycees.org

Holiday Market Shopping

Oct. 18-20. Wilmington.
Coast Line Convention Center.
(910) 686-3338

Sound Country Celebration

Oct. 19. Edenton.
Canoe & kayak races.
(800) 645-8466.
www.edenton.com/events

Clown Celebration

Oct. 19. Wilmington.
Hugh MacRae Park.
(910) 395-4280.

Family Fun Day

Oct. 19. Wilmington.
Battleship North Carolina.
(910) 251-5797.
www.battleshipnc.com

N.C. State Chili Cook-off

Oct. 19. Havelock.
Jaycee Park.
(252) 447-1101.

N.C. Oyster Festival

Oct. 19-20. Ocean Isle Beach.
(910) 754-6644.

N.C. Yam Festival

Oct. 20-26. Tabor City.
(910) 653-2031.

Ghost Walk

Oct. 24-26. New Bern.
(252) 638-8558.

State BBQ Championship

Oct. 26. Washington.
Music, crafts, costumes.
(252) 975-1691.

Fall Celebration

Oct. 26. Morehead City.
Costumes, story-telling.
(252) 808-0440.

N.C. Festival by the Sea

Oct. 26-27. Holden Beach.
(910) 842-4820.

Cape Fear Fair & Expo

Oct. 31-Nov. 9. Wilmington.
(910) 313-1234.

Trick or Treat Downtown

Oct. 31. Hertford.
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Plan, Plant and Protect. These are the keys to successful landscape design. As autumn arrives, so has the time of developing long-range plans for planting and giving aid until plants have become established. Fall and winter plantings will have time to develop roots and adjust before spring.

GARDENING FACTS

Poisonous House Plants

Many of the popular house plants grown indoors over winter are poisonous. Among these are English ivy, geranium, olee, sonsevierio (mother-in-law's tongue), sedums and monstero delicioso (Swiss cheese plant), which has big exotic leaves with cut-outs on the leaf surfaces. Monsteros are effective in rooms of contemporary design. Mature plants produce an edible fruit similar to the pineapple in flavor.

Poisonous plants are often seen in hotel lobbies. Coleus, grown for colorful leaves when placed near a window for sunlight, often attracts children. Fishtail palm (Corytophetes) lends a tropical accent. Pothos and grape ivy vines are among the popular vines for indoor culture. Mistletoe and the hollies, both popular Christmas decorations, should be avoided.

In case of accidental ingestion or exposure, call 911, your local poison center, or a physician. North Carolina's Poison Center toll-free number: (800) 848-6911.

Poisonous plant list compiled
courtesy of Hank Smith,
North Carolina Dept. of Agriculture.

Spring Bulbs

October and November are ideal months for planting bulbs to flower in the spring. Among the favorites: anemones, grape hyacinths, scillas, lily-of-the-valley, snowflakes, and refrigerated tulip bulbs. Summer caladium bulbs should be dug when leaves die back, or just after the first frost. You can dry bulbs by placing them in a sunny spot each day until clinging soil and leaves can be easily removed. Then pack in old dry sawdust, sand, peat moss or wrap in newspapers. Store in a frost-free spot until planting time next spring. Their showy leaves add to the summer garden.

Compost Pile

A very helpful and sometimes necessary ingredient for healthy plant growth is compost. Most successful gardeners utilize compost to feed plants and ensure they receive adequate moisture. Most green leaves, including grass clippings and vegetable scraps from the kitchen, are high in nitrogen and rot quickly. Dead leaves, twigs and shredded newspapers are high in carbon. They decompose more slowly—but surely. By spring, the autumn compost can be used. An all-inclusive rule is pile it up, turn it occasionally, and let it rot.

Bigleaf Hydrangea: Prune Carefully

Autumn pruning of bigleaf hydrangea (*H. macrophylla*) is advisable if done with care. This species blooms on the tips of last year's growth. Cut out old canes with faded flowers and leave all new growth shoots undisturbed. If the weather is severe in late winter when plants are preparing for spring growth, protect the clumps or delicate terminal flower buds could be lost. The bigleaf hydrangea produces white, pink or blue flowers.

Increase Perennials by Division

Now is a good time to divide perennials as they go dormant for winter. Almost all, except those sensitive to cold weather, can be dug, separated and replanted. They can be divided in the ground or after lifting the entire clump. A sharp-shooter shovel works better than round-pointed




These brightly-colored anemones are popular with North Carolina gardeners.

shovels. Cut back tops to avoid tangling the shovel blade in the foliage. After removing the clump, use a heavy kitchen knife to divide the root mass.

Training Hedges By Pruning

Pruning hedges before cold weather will allow time for new growth to conceal cut branches and twigs. Trim out dead wood and remove any seedlings beneath privet, honeysuckle, althea, elms, and other hedging plants. Delay holly pruning until Christmastime when it is used for decoration. When pruning hedges, keep the lower portion of the hedge thick so it receives ample light. The top needs to be narrower than the base.

Yellowing of Chinese Holly

Ilex cornuta varieties of Chinese hollies, especially the popular Burfordi, sometimes produce unusually heavy fruit set. As a result, limbs with the heaviest number of berries often have yellow foliage. This is not due to insect or disease damage, but is caused by a nutritional problem due to heavy demands on the plant. A light application of balanced fertilizer at this time often helps. The most satisfactory solution is to increase the fertility level earlier in the season, starting as plants come into bloom. Following a spring application, apply another in midsummer. 

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Overhead radiant heaters are ideal for work areas.

New, safer electric space heaters provide comfort, savings

By James Dulley

New small electric space heaters are safe and convenient. Even if you have a gas, propane or oil furnace, using a few electric space heaters instead of cranking up the thermostat can cut your overall monthly utility bills. It can also improve your comfort because you get heat to the rooms where you need it the most.

The fall and spring are particularly good times to use electric space heaters instead of your central heating system. With the milder weather in the fall and spring, starting the furnace or heat pump

will surely overheat most of the rooms in your home when only a couple of them are uncomfortably chilly. Also, if you run your central system less, it will last longer with fewer maintenance expenses.

When you are shopping for an electric space heater and see the myriad of designs, styles, sizes, and prices, it can be mind-boggling. Even though most space heaters have a maximum heat output of 1,500 watts (so they can be plugged into a standard wall outlet), there are significant differences among them. Don't just buy the cheapest models on sale.

The heating element design, heat/temperature controls and the heat distribution method have the greatest impact on the electric space heater's safety and your family's comfort level. Just the heater's shape can impact its tip-over resistance around children and its area of heating/comfort coverage.

Before buying an electric space heater, think about how it will be used. This determines the best heating element design and important features to consider. The basic heating element design types are convection (fan), low-temperature radiant (oil-filled) and high-temperature focused radiant heaters. You will probably use different models in various rooms depending on your activities.

To heat a large area, standard convection, baseboard or tall oil-filled radiator types of electric heaters are effective. They circulate the air to heat an entire room area. For smaller areas or a specific spot, such as an easy chair or computer stand, a high-temperature radiant heater focuses the heat more effectively without wasting excess energy to heat the entire room.

Within the basic types are many design variations and features. Since you mentioned safety around children, some of the newer convection models use either non-glow elements or ceramic elements. These reduce the chances of a hand getting hurt or having a child ignite a piece of paper in the heater. Even though the elements do not glow red, they are still effective for heating the room air.

Ceramic heating elements are unique in that they self-regulate their heat output. As the room air gets warmer, so does the safe ceramic heating element. As the element gets warmer, its electrical resistance increases so the current flow is reduced and less heat is produced. The newest ceramic heaters have programmable heat/temperature controls and use digital displays for simple adjustment.

For the most precise temperature control in a room, select one of the new convection heaters with a true temperature dial. Instead of the unit just switching on and off when the temperature setting is reached as most space heaters do, it stays on but the heat output is automatically reduced. If the room begins to cool down, the heat output increases. This maintains very even room temperatures.

Quartz heaters use elements that glow red to radiate heat like the sun does to target a specific area. Most of them have two long glass heating elements to provide three heat outputs (typically 600 watts, 900 watts and 1,500 watts on together.) Some models also include a tiny, quiet fan to gently circulation and mix the room air. Select one with a child-safe, snap-off grill to allow you to replace the bulbs and clean the reflectors for high efficiency. The plug tongs are used as the key to open the grill.

Technically, all electric heating elements are 100 percent efficient, so do not let the packaging hype fool you. All of the electricity consumed by the space heater is converted into heat, as opposed to a furnace where some heat is lost up the flue. Check the packaging information for these features-adjustable thermostat, several heat settings, automatic freeze guard (automatically turns it on when your house gets very cold to avoid freezing), and timers.

Write for (instantly download - www.dulley.com) Utility Bills Update No. 706 - buyer's guide of 10 electric space heater manufacturers listing design types, heat settings, thermostats, comfort and safety features, a savings chart, and safe usage tips. Please include \$3.00 and a business-size SASE and send to: James Dulley, Carolina Country, 6906 Royalgreen Dr., Cincinnati, OH 45244

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Graveyard Cake

Graveyard Cake

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup butter or margarine
- 1 cup water
- ¼ cup baking cocoa
- ½ cup sour cream
- 2 eggs

FROSTING

- ¼ cup butter or margarine
- 3 tablespoons milk
- 2 tablespoons baking cocoa
- 2 cups confectioners' sugar
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 18 cream-filled chocolate sandwich cookies
- Green and brown decorator's icing or gel
- 9 cream-filled oval vanilla sandwich cookies
- 1 cup whipped topping
- Pumpkin candies and gummy worms, optional

In a mixing bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking soda and salt; set aside. In a saucepan, combine butter, water and cocoa; bring to a boil over medium heat. Add to flour mixture; beat well. Beat in sour cream and eggs. Pour into a greased 13-inch by 9-inch by 2-inch baking pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 35 – 38 minutes or until a toothpick inserted near the center comes out clean. Cool on a wire rack for 5 minutes. Meanwhile, in a saucepan, combine butter, milk and cocoa; bring to a boil. Remove from the heat; stir in sugar and vanilla. Pour over warm cake. Crumble chocolate cookies; sprinkle over frosting while still warm. Cool completely. For tombstones, use icing to decorate vanilla cookies with words or faces; place on cake. For ghosts, make mounds of whipped topping; using icing to add eyes and mouths as desired. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Just before serving, add pumpkins and gummy worms if desired.

Yield: 16 servings

Savory Stuffed Pumpkin

- 1½ pounds ground beef
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1 can (10¾ ounces) condensed cream of mushroom soup, undiluted
- 1 jar (4 ounces) sliced mushrooms, drained
- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1½ cups cooked rice
- 1 can (8 ounces) sliced water chestnuts, drained
- 1 large pie pumpkin (8 to 9 pounds)
- Vegetable oil

In a skillet over medium heat, cook beef and onion until meat is no longer pink; drain. Add soup, mushrooms, soy sauce and brown sugar. Simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in rice and water chestnuts. Wash pumpkin; cut a 6 inch circle around stem. Remove top and set aside. Scoop out seeds and loose fibers from the inside. Spoon beef mixture into pumpkin; replace top. Place in a greased 15-inch by 10-inch by 1-inch baking pan. Rub oil over outside of pumpkin. Bake, uncovered, at 350 degrees for 1½ hours until pumpkin is tender. Scoop out some pumpkin and fill with some of beef mixture.

Yield: 6 servings



Recipes are by Taste of Home magazine. For a sample copy, send \$2 to Taste of Home, Suite 4321, PO Box 990, Greendale WI 53129-0990. Visit the Web page at www.tasteofhome.com.

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Halloween Party Mix

Halloween Party Mix

- 1 package (11 ounces) pretzels
- 1 package (10½ ounces) miniature peanut butter filled butter-flavored crackers
- 1 cup dry roasted peanuts
- 1 cup sugar
- ½ cup butter or margarine
- ½ cup light corn syrup
- 2 tablespoons vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 package (10 ounces) M&M's
- 1 package (18½ ounces) candy corn

In a large bowl, combine the pretzels, crackers and peanuts. In a large saucepan, combine sugar, butter and corn syrup. Bring to boil over medium heat; boil for 5 minutes. Remove from the heat; stir in vanilla and baking soda (mixture will foam). Pour over pretzel mixture and stir until coated. Pour into a greased 15-inch by 10-inch by 1-inch baking pan. Bake at 250 degrees for 45 minutes, stirring every 10-15 minutes. Break apart while warm. Toss with M&M's and candy corn. Cool completely. Store in airtight containers.

Yield: 16 cups.

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